

Council Begins Work on Amendment 1 for Spiny Dogfish

The Council at its March meeting voted to begin work on Amendment 1 to the joint Spiny Dogfish FMP. The Council acted to limit the number of issues addressed so that the amendment can be implemented by the start of the 2006-2007 fishing year. The Council will address the two disapproved issues remaining from the original FMP, i.e., the biomass rebuilding target and the establishment of a stock rebuilding schedule that is consistent with the National Standard one guidelines. The Amendment will also include two other issues which the Mid-Atlantic Council currently has or will soon have implemented for all of its FMPs. These two issues are the subtraction of overages from the next fishing year's annual quota, and the ability to develop multi-year quota specifications.

The Joint MA/NE Spiny Dogfish Committee met in Providence, RI in February and reviewed the comments from the scoping hearings that were held in 2003. There were 10 major issues that staff synthesized from the scoping comments and the Committee reviewed and rejected two issues. The Joint Committee decided there was no reason to address the limited access issues because as the resource rebuilds there is not likely to be a directed fishery for several decades. The Joint Committee also rejected the idea of prohibiting spiny dogfish possession in the EEZ.

A spiny dogfish stock assessment was conducted by the SARC in June 2003. According to that assessment the "spiny dogfish stock is overfished and overfishing is not occurring." The estimated fishing mortality in 2002 exceeded the rebuilding target ($F = 0.03$) by a factor of 3. "The female spawning portion of the biomass has declined by about 75% since 1988 and is at 29% of the biomass target." The SARC continues stating that "recruitment estimates from 1997 to 2003 represent the seven lowest values in the entire series."

The management advice that the SARC provided is: "given low current spawning biomass, poor recruitment and reduced pup survivorship, the SARC recommends total removals (landings, discards, Canadian catch) below those derived from the estimated rebuilding F (0.03). Targeting females should be avoided."

The future forecast from the SARC is that: "rebuilding of spiny dogfish populations will take at least 15 years under the most optimistic scenario. The low biomass of spawning females, high abundance of males, and the near absence of dogfish less than 50 cm will induce large oscillations in the stock regardless of management strategies. Forecasts of rebuilding which take into account the apparent lower survival of pups from smaller females indicate that rebuilding will not occur."



Many fishermen have difficulty with the stock assessment because the scientific findings do not support what they see when they retrieve their nets. Unquestionably, the total stock of dogfish is large and was estimated to have been in excess of 800 million pounds in 2002. However, the near complete lack of large adult females (which had been targeted by the fishery since the US began seriously harvesting the resource in the late 1980s), the life history characteristics (long-lived, few pups, long gestation), and the record low recruitment since 1997, all lead to serious concern for the sustainability of this resource. ■

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RECENT NEWS

Council Discusses Amendment 10

January 28, 2004

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met in Alexandria, Virginia to consider a number of issues. At the meeting, the Council adopted a motion to identify a controlled access program for Atlantic mackerel as the primary purpose of Amendment 10 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid and Butterfish FMP. The Council also adopted a motion that Amendment 10 should consider the creation of a separate FMP for Atlantic Mackerel if supported by a cost benefit analysis.

Council Agrees on Multi-Year TALs for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

March 2, 2004

During its March 2004 meeting in Wrightsville Beach, NC the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council agreed to move forward with Framework Adjustment 5 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. This action is designed to streamline the administrative and regulatory processes related to specifying Total Allowable Landings (TAL) for the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries. The Council also reviewed issues developed by the Joint Spiny Dogfish Committee for inclusion in Amendment 1 to the Spiny Dogfish Fishery Management Plan.

Public Encouraged to Attend Bycatch Workshop

March 5, 2004

The public is invited to attend the Northeast Regional Bycatch Workshop organized by the National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Regional Office (NERO) and co-sponsored by NERO and NOAA Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant in cooperation with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, New England Fishery Management Council, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Representatives from these agencies will collaborate and work together with fishery constituents to specifically address bycatch issues in the northeast region. The workshop will be held in Wakefield, Massachusetts at the Sheraton Colonial Conference Center, June 29-July 1, 2004.

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2004 Meeting Schedule

January 20-22

Holiday Inn Select,
Alexandria, VA

March 16-18

Shell Island Oceanfront Suites,
Wrightsville Beach, NC

May 4-6

Crowne Plaza Meadowlands,
Secaucus, NJ

June 22-25

Hershey Lodge & Convention Center,
Hershey, PA

August 10-12

Wyndham Inner Harbor,
Baltimore, MD

October 5-7

Holiday Inn,
Ronkonkoma, NY

December 7-9

Holiday Inn Select,
Claymont, DE

Seafood Recipe *Tilefish au gratin*

2 pounds tilefish fillets
3 tablespoons margarine
6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 cups milk
salt and ground black pepper to taste
1 1/2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese

- 1 Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
- 2 Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add tilefish fillets and cook for 2 to 4 minutes; drain.
- 3 Melt margarine in a medium saucepan. Remove from heat and mix in the flour and milk. Return to stove over medium heat, and stir until thickened. Season with salt and pepper.
- 4 Grease an 8 x 12 inch baking dish. Flake cooked tilefish into baking dish, alternating layers with sauce. Sprinkle top with shredded cheese.
- 5 Bake in preheated oven for 20 to 25 minutes, or until cheese is browned.
- 6 Enjoy.

Makes 6 servings

Atlantic Mackerel, Squid and Butterfish Update

The council adopted Framework 4 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid and Butterfish FMP at its December meeting in Wilmington, DE and submitted the proposed action to the Secretary of Commerce shortly thereafter. Framework 4 addresses the expiration of the moratorium on entry into the *Illex* fishery. In May 1995, a limited entry program was adopted by the Council through Amendment 5, but due to concerns that capacity might be insufficient to fully exploit the annual quota, a five year sunset provision was placed on the *Illex* moratorium. The sunset provision for the moratorium on entry into the *Illex* fishery, implemented in 1997, was set to expire in July 2002, but was extended for one year under Framework 2. The *Illex* moratorium was then set to expire in July 2003 until action was taken by the Council under Framework 3 to extend the moratorium until July 2004. The sole purpose of Framework 4 is to extend the moratorium on entry to the *Illex* fishery while the Council addresses this issue in Amendment 9 to the FMP. Analyses of harvest capacity conducted for this framework action clearly indicated that overcapacity for the *Illex* fishery currently exists (i.e., the maximum harvest capacity of current

moratorium permit holders far exceeds the long term sustainable yield for the species). The publication of the proposed rule for Framework 4 is expected in April of 2004, and if consistent with Council action would extend the moratorium on entry until July 2009.

Amendment 9

The Council is also currently preparing Amendment 9 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP. The purpose of the last amendment (Amendment 8), was to bring the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP into compliance with the new and revised National Standards and other required provisions of the Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA). The purpose of Amendment 9 is to take remedial action relative to the disapproved portions of Amendment 8 and to address a number of issues related to the management of the Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish fisheries which have developed since Amendment 8 was implemented. In addition to meeting the requirements of the SFA, the Council is required to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act to assess the potential effects of the proposed actions on the

human environment.

Specifically, Amendment 9 addresses the disapproved portion of Amendment 8 dealing with gear impacts on essential fish habitat. In addition, this amendment considers extending the moratorium on additional entry to the *Illex* fishery and would allow for the specification of management measures (including quota specifications) for multiple years for Atlantic mackerel, *Illex* squid, and butterfish. Finally, additional issues that are being addressed in this amendment include the need to consider more extensive measures to mitigate bycatch and discards, the need to allow for the transit of vessels possessing *Illex* taken in NAFO areas outside US jurisdiction, and the need to revise the overfishing definition for *Loligo* squid based on recommendations in the most recent stock assessment.

Council staff are currently developing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Amendment 9. After approval of the DEIS, public hearings for Amendment 9 will be held later in 2004. The current schedule calls for Council adoption of Amendment 9 for submission to the Secretary of Commerce in late 2004 or early 2005. ■

Staff Update

The Council begins 2004 with two fewer employees. In February, Marla Trollan, our Public Affairs Officer, left the Council to become the Northeast Regional Outreach Coordinator for the NMFS. During her five year tenure at the Council, Marla developed the Council's public affairs and outreach program. Marla was responsible for the design and construction of the Council's webpage, editor of the newsletter and author of Council press releases. In addition, Marla also developed numerous

brochures and reports that were widely used by our constituents. She can now be reached at Marla.Trollan@noaa.gov.

In March, Joanna Davis, our Executive Assistant decided that it was time for a career change and left the Council to go back to school to become a medical technologist.

Joanna worked for the Council for over 15 years. During those many years of service, Joanna provided administrative support to

three different executive directors and numerous Council members.

Both Marla and Joanna will be sorely missed by their Council family. We wish them the very best for success in their new endeavors. ■

Framework 5 to the Summer Flounder FMP

The Council met on March 17th in Wrightsville Beach, NC to discuss Framework 5 to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This framework would modify the current regulations to allow for specification of total allowable landing (TAL) levels for the summer flounder, scup and/or black sea bass fisheries in any given year for the next one to three years. If this framework is adopted by the Council at the second framework meeting in May, and approved by NMFS, it would be available for use for the 2005 fishing year.

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) specifies a TAL for the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries to achieve the target fishing mortality rates specified by the FMP. Under the current management system for these species, this specification is conducted every year for TALs that apply only to the following year. The administrative procedures involved in the specification of these annual TALs include documentation of environmental impact assessments as required under the

Magnuson-Stevens Act and the National Environmental Protection Act of 1969 (NEPA). However, a thorough review of the likely impacts of proposed TALs to the human environment could be conducted on a less frequent basis while still satisfying the regulatory mandates of the FMP and achieving the target fishing mortality rates each year.

If multi-year TALs are adopted by the Council, all of the environmental and regulatory review procedures currently required under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and NEPA would be conducted and documented during the year in which specifications were set. These review procedures would consider impacts throughout the time span for which specifications were set as well as the range of harvest levels for years 2 and 3.

Multi-year TALs would not have to be constant from year to year, but would instead be based upon expectations of future stock conditions as indicated by the best available scientific information during the year in which specifications

are set. Every year, a review of updated stock conditions for each management unit will be conducted by the Monitoring Committee, and its findings will be presented to the Council. As part of the Monitoring Committee's annual review process, a TAL estimate will be generated based upon the updated scientific information on stock conditions and the established target fishing mortality or exploitation rates for each species. If the new TAL is different than the previously specified TAL, the Council will be presented with this information and a new specification setting process, with all associated environmental and regulatory review procedures will be initiated. Under the proposed action, the Council would not be obligated to specify multi-year TALs, but would be allowed to specify TALs for as many as three years, if so desired. would not be obligated to specify multi-year TALs, but would be allowed to specify TALs for as many as three years, if so desired. ■



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